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CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A method for sending a notice that a user is away, the method comprising:

   determining email addresses of recipients to which email messages have been previously sent within a configurable time period to form a set of determined email addresses; and

   replying with a notification that the user is away only in response to receiving an email message having a same email address within set of determined email addresses.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining step includes:

   responsive to the user sending an email message to a recipient, storing an email address for the recipient and a date of the email message in the set of determined email addresses.

3. The method of claim 4, wherein the determining step further includes:

   removing the email address from the list of addresses if the data is older than a selected period of time.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the configurable time period is set by the user.

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5.   A data processing system for sending a notice that a
user is away, the data processing system comprising:
    determining means for determining email addresses of
recipients to which email messages have been previously
sent within a configurable time period to form a set of
determined email addresses; and
    replying means for replying with a notification that
the user is away only in response to receiving an email
message having a same email address within set of
determined email addresses.

6.   The data processing system of claim 5, wherein the
determining means and replying means are located in an
email server.

7.   The data processing system of claim 5, wherein the
determining means and replying means are located in an
email client.

8.   The data processing system of claim 5, wherein the
determining means includes:
    storing means for storing an email address for the
recipient and a date of the email message in the set of
determined email addresses in response to the user
sending an email message to a recipient.

9.   The data processing system of claim 10, wherein the
determining means further includes:

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removing means for removing the email address from the list of addresses if the data is older than a selected period of time.

10. The data processing system of claim 5, wherein the configurable time period is set by the user.

11. A computer program product in a computer readable medium for sending a notice that a user is away, the computer program product comprising:

first instructions for determining email addresses of recipients to which email messages have been previously sent within a configurable time period to form a set of determined email addresses; and

second instructions for replying with a notification that the user is away only in response to receiving an email message having a same email address within set of determined email addresses.

12. The computer program product of claim 11, wherein the first instructions includes:

sub instructions for storing an email address for the recipient and a date of the email message in the set of determined email addresses in response to the user sending an email message to a recipient.

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13. The computer program product of claim 12, wherein the second instructions further include:

    second sub instructions for removing the email address from the list of addresses if the data is older than a selected period of time.

14. The computer program product of claim 11, wherein the configurable time period is set by the user.